

Madam Speaker, I introduced House Resolution 771 on September 24, 2009 to recognize the 3,000 Americans diagnosed with Mesothelioma each year and raise awareness about this rare form of cancer. After more than a year of work, a coalition of support came together to mark September 26, 2010 as the first ever 'National Mesothelioma Awareness Day.' I have to thank 58 of my colleagues - both Democrats and Republicans - who co-sponsored this resolution and all the advocates for their work.

Mesothelioma is an asbestos-linked cancer most often found in a person's chest, lungs, or abdomen. More than a million Americans are exposed to dangerous levels of asbestos while on the job, including military personnel, firefighters, and construction workers. In fact, workers in our own Capitol complex are suffering from asbestos exposure. Many of these individuals are unaware of the risk at the time of exposure.

Despite decades of warnings about the dangers of asbestos, too many Americans are still unaware of the devastating nature of this disease. Although over 50 countries have banned asbestos, the United States has not. It is found in millions of products sold in this country, including brake pads, roofing materials, and gaskets.

The fight against Mesothelioma is a personal issue for me. In 2000, my friend and predecessor Congressman Bruce Vento was diagnosed with Pleural Mesothelioma. The news was devastating for his family, friends, and all of us in Minnesota that knew him. Bruce represented Minnesota's Fourth Congressional District from 1977-2000. During his service in Congress, he was tireless advocate on behalf of his constituents and a national champion for environmental protection and the rights of the homeless.

Awareness is critical for early diagnosis and treatment. 'National Mesothelioma Awareness Day' honors those living with Mesothelioma, those that have died from the disease, and their families. House Resolution 771 is an important step toward educating the nation about the causes of this deadly disease and the need for better treatments and additional research.

I strongly urge all of my colleagues to support passage of this bipartisan resolution.